

Ask any Missouri resident about transportation problems in the state and they'll almost certainly mention I-70.

It's no wonder. Opened in the sixties, many sections of the highway are clogged with traffic, and nearly half of the route's pavement needs rehabilitating.

But Missouri is not alone. As U.S. interstate highways begin to show their age and attract more traffic than they were designed to carry, repairing and revitalizing these thoroughfares has become paramount for transportation policymakers across the country.

That's why the Missouri Department of Transportation has been focusing attention on the future of I-70. Since 1999, MoDOT has been looking at I-70 between the cities of Independence and Lake St. Louis. After a feasibility study and a first-tier environmental impact study, MoDOT concluded that **widening and reconstructing I-70** would be the most effective improvement strategy.

Today, in the second phase or "tier" of the study, called Improve I-70, MoDOT is looking at what widening and reconstructing would mean on a local level. Studies are being conducted in seven geographic areas to ensure that the location and general configuration of I-70 improvements consider local issues as well as state-wide mobility. The result will be both a long-term vision and a short-term plan to guide future improvements.

This newsletter is the first of many to keep you informed of MoDOT's efforts toward improving I-70. Here you'll find the latest information about activities in each of the seven sections under study, and learn more about efforts to advance the project toward design and construction.

Overall Status

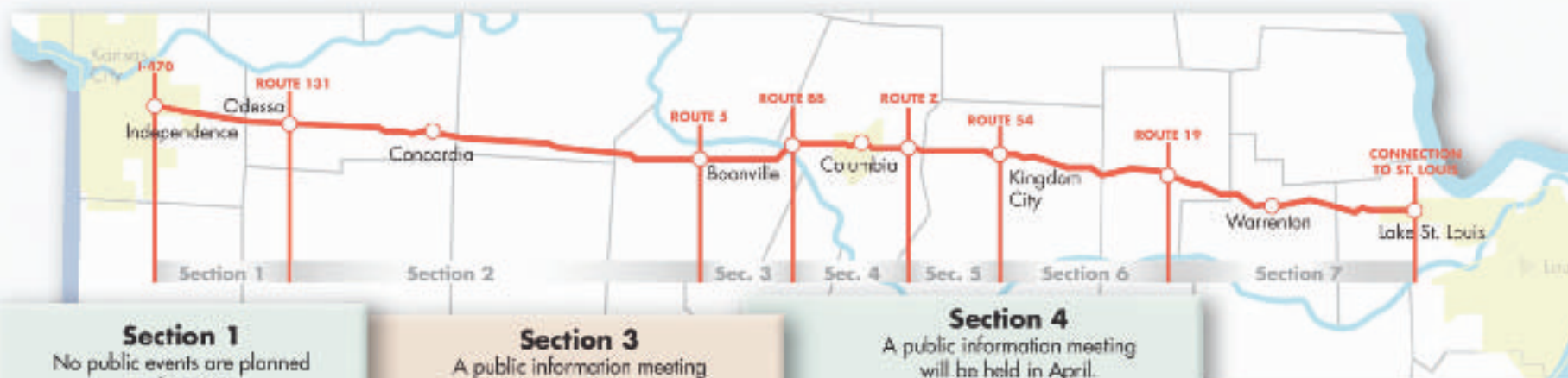
The seven studies included in Improve I-70 are at similar stages of development. Most are in the process of gathering data and reviewing decisions made during the First Tier Study. This includes a corridor screening process to determine if widening and reconstruction should occur to the north or south of the existing route. Corridor screening in Sections 4 (Columbia), 6 (Mineola Hill) and 7 (Warrenton/Wright City/Wentzville) is considering the possible construction of additional I-70 lanes in a new location. Some section teams have developed initial ideas for how to improve interchanges along I-70 while incorporating MoDOT's access management guidelines.

On the next page you'll find a calendar of public activities planned for the coming months. Also inside is information about access management and study documentation, as well as detailed status reports for each section. Open here to learn more about Improve I-70.



Calendar of Events

A number of public information meetings will be held across the I-70 corridor in the coming months. The purpose of the meetings will be to share study information gathered to date, discuss the corridor screening process, and in some sections, review preliminary options for improving interchanges. More detail about section activities can be found on pages 5 through 11. If you have questions about the meetings, please contact the Improve I-70 project office at 1-800-590-0066.



Section 1

No public events are planned at this time.

Section 2

Two separate public information meetings will be held in April.

Tuesday, April 15

4-7 p.m.

Open House – come and go at any time
Concordia Community Center
802 South Garden St.
Concordia, MO

Wednesday, April 16

4-7 p.m.

Open House – come and go at any time
Blackwater R II School
300 Doddridge St.
Blackwater, MO

Section 3

A public information meeting will be held in May.

Saturday, May 3

1-3 p.m.

Open House – come and go at any time
Brief Presentation at 2 p.m.
Boonville High School Cafeteria
1690 W. Ashley Road
Boonville, MO

A special session will be held with landowners prior to the public meeting. Those who live or own property adjacent to or near existing I-70 will receive invitations to attend the special session. If you have questions, please contact the project office at 1-800-590-0066.

Section 5

Information about study efforts in Section 5 will be available at the public meeting being held in Section 6.

Section 4

A public information meeting will be held in April.

Wednesday, April 23

4:30-7:30 p.m.

Open House – come and go at any time
Brief Presentation at 5:30 p.m.
Columbia Activity and Recreation Center
Multipurpose Room
1701 West Ash St.
Columbia, MO

Section 6

A public information meeting will be held in April.

Wednesday, April 2

4-7 p.m.

Open House – come and go at any time
Brief Presentations at 5 p.m. and 6 p.m.
North Callaway High School
2700 U.S. 54
Kingdom City, MO

Section 7

Two identical public information meetings will be held in April.

Wednesday, April 9

4-7 p.m.

Open House – come and go at any time
Progress Park – Banquet Hall
968 Meyer Road
Wentzville, MO

Thursday, April 10

4-7 p.m.

Open House – come and go at any time
Warren County University Outreach and Extension Center
107 W. Walton
Warrenton, MO

Access Management: Increasing Safety and Efficiency

Missouri's interstate highways are carrying more and more traffic every year, and the forecast calls for continued growth above the national average. By 2030, traffic volumes on I-70 are expected to double – with truck traffic accounting for an ever greater portion of total traffic.

At some point, all of those additional vehicles must enter or exit the roadway. That means interchanges – and the local roads they connect to – must be redesigned to handle the load. Traffic flow and overall safety at interchanges can be improved with effective **access management**: a careful planning process that looks at...

- the design and the location of interchanges,
- the location of nearby frontage roads, cross-streets and driveways, and
- the potential for traffic conflicts – places where vehicles may cross paths.

MoDOT has developed access management guidelines for interstate corridors. The guidelines establish criteria for interchange spacing, exit ramp spacing, and the location of driveways and outer roads relative to the interchange. Members of the Improve I-70 team will use these guidelines as they develop interchange improvement options. Study teams also will work closely with communities to ensure that access management plans serve the needs of local residents and businesses while providing a safe driving environment to motorists.

A successful access management plan can offer a wealth of benefits, including fewer traffic accidents, less travel time delays and fuel consumption, and increased traffic capacity. Access management can extend the life of a roadway by reducing the need and the expense for future highway redesign and reconstruction.

Access management is a long-term solution that makes the most of existing resources and provides a firm basis for future growth and development. More information about access management can be found on the Improve I-70 Web site at www.ImproveI70.org. An informational video about access management will be available at public meetings being held this spring. For a copy of the video, contact the project office at 1-800-590-0066.

Improve I-70 Team Members are in the field documenting environmental, cultural and historic resources. Their job can be made easier with access to private property adjacent to and near I-70. If you received a letter and "right of entry form" requesting access, please return the form soon. If you have questions or concerns, contact the project office at **1-800-590-0066**.

Documenting the Landscape

As spring approaches, so too does the window of opportunity for MoDOT cultural resources teams to return to the field for examinations that are critical to the planning and approval process for highway projects. This time-consuming process is about to begin throughout the Interstate 70 corridor and is an important step toward completion of the Improve I-70 environmental studies.

In late January and early February, more than 3,000 letters were sent to landowners requesting permission for non-invasive access to property adjacent to and near I-70. (In the Kansas City and Columbia areas, the mailing will be sent later.) Field reviews give MoDOT an early identification of resources and are a valuable element to project design, making it easier to avoid or minimize impact to significant buildings or structures.

MoDOT architectural historians must document (by photograph and description) every structure within 100 feet of the proposed roadway. Any structure (and a structure can be almost anything – a gate, barn, sign, etc.) that is or will be 50 years old by the year 2010 needs additional extensive information that is presented to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to determine if it is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The time involved for this one activity can be months in research and additional months in document preparation and reviews.

Continued on back page

An Environmentally Sound Plan

Environmental Documents Move the Project Forward

At the end of this phase of Improve I-70, MoDOT will have a clear plan for the location and general configuration of I-70 improvements between Independence and Lake St. Louis. The plan will have been developed in close coordination with local communities and other state and federal agencies, and will have considered the social, environmental and economic impacts of improvements. The plan will be outlined in seven comprehensive documents that summarize all the information gathered, activities conducted and decisions made during the second tier.

The appropriate type of environmental process and documentation to be developed for each section – which was determined as a part of the First Tier Study – depends on the nature of the improvements to be made and the significance of potential impacts. The three types of environmental processes/documents are:

Categorical Exclusion (CE)

A categorical exclusion is a written document developed for areas where improvements are expected to have no significant environmental impacts. A CE is being conducted in Section 5, located between Route Z and U.S. Highway 54.

Environmental Assessment (EA)

An environmental assessment is conducted

when the extent of environmental impact caused by improvements is unknown. An EA will result in one of two environmental documents; a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), or an Environmental Impact Statement (below). Environmental assessments are being conducted in Section 1 (from Independence to Odessa), Section 2 (from Route 131 to Route 5), Section 3 (from Boonville to Rocheport) and in Section 6 (from Kingdom City to Montgomery City).

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

When improvements are expected to have a significant environmental impact, an in-depth analysis is conducted to determine how to minimize those impacts. This process is documented in an environmental impact statement. If approved by the Federal Highway Administration, an EIS will result in a Record of Decision (ROD). An EIS will be produced for Section 4 (from Route BB to Route Z in the Columbia area) and in Section 7 (from Route 19 to Lake St. Louis).

It's important to remember that each of these environmental documents will be an extension of the EIS developed during the First Tier Study. That EIS concluded that the widening and reconstruction strategy would best address the future needs of the I-70 corridor.

Completion and Federal Highway Administration

approval of second tier environmental documents will allow Improve I-70 to proceed to the next steps – detailed design and construction. While no funding is currently allocated for these steps, completion of the current studies will allow MoDOT to have a comprehensive plan for how the interstate will look and operate in the future. That means short-term improvements can be made that advance I-70 toward its long-term vision. It also ensures that, should funding become available, MoDOT will have all the federally required documentation to proceed with design and construction.

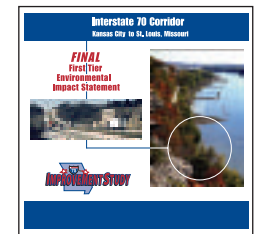
Mile Marker

Launched in January 2000, and completed in December 2001, the First Tier Study considered seven strategies for improving I-70 from I-470 in

eastern Kansas City to the Lake St. Louis exit near St. Louis.

Widening and reconstructing the existing I-70 was selected as the preferred approach to improving the interstate corridor.

Documentation detailing the first tier and its decisions is available on line at www.ImproveI70.org in the "Corridor Documents" section.



ON The Move

Section status reports

The following pages provide detailed status reports for each section of I-70 under study. If you have any questions about Improve I-70 activities, contact the project office at 1-800-590-0066.

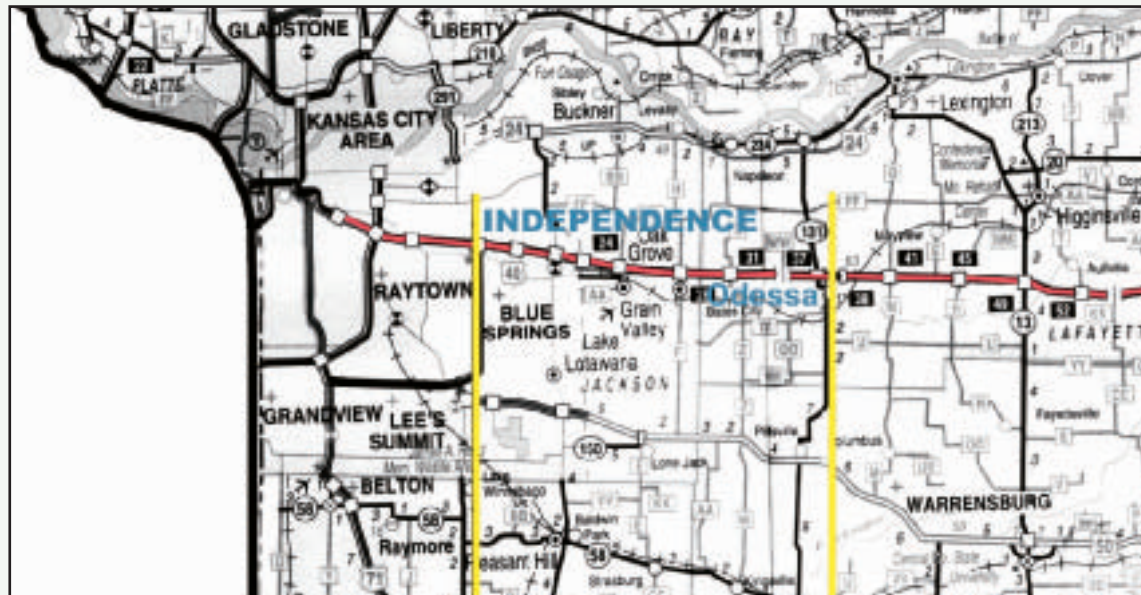
Section 1

Independence to Odessa

The Section 1 Team is gathering data and reviewing decisions made during the First Tier Study. This includes a corridor screening to determine if widening and reconstruction should occur to the north or

south of the existing route. Corridor screening is now focusing only on the "rural" areas of the section (east of Oak Grove). That's because methods for improving I-70 in areas west of Oak Grove (Jackson County) are currently being evaluated through a Major Investment Study. The MIS, being conducted by MoDOT and the Mid America Regional Council, will reach some conclusions by mid-2003 regarding the types of improvements most appropriate for the area. Those conclusions will allow the Section 1 Team's Improve I-70 study efforts to proceed in full force. A public meeting is expected in Section 1 later this year.

More information about the MIS is available at www.I70mis.org. If you have questions or concerns about activities in Section 1, please call the project office at 1-800-590-0066.





Section 2

Route 131 to Route 5

The Section 2 Team is in the final stages of a corridor screening process to determine if widening and reconstruction should occur to the north or south of the existing route. The team is also developing various alternatives for improving the design of interchanges in Section 2 while applying MoDOT's access management guidelines.

Information about corridor screening and interchange improvement alternatives will be available for review and comment at public meetings in Concordia, Blackwater and Boonville (see details on page 2). Maps and graphics will be displayed and study team

members will be present to answer questions. Public input received at the meetings will be used to refine the improvement alternatives and identify additional issues that should be considered during the study process.

Using input gathered at the meetings, the Section 2 Team will determine which of the interchange improvement alternatives should be carried forward for more detailed analysis. That analysis will consider each alternative's benefits and impacts on the natural and man-made environments, and will ultimately point to a preferred alternative for each interchange location.

Section 3

Boonville to Rocheport

The Section 3 Team is in the process of gathering information and data, and reviewing decisions made during the First Tier Study. This includes a corridor screening to determine if widening and reconstruction should occur to the north or south of the existing route. Corridor screening is expected to be complete this spring or early summer.

The team also is developing various alternatives for how to improve the design of five interchanges in Section 3, while incorporating MoDOT's access management guidelines. Team members are currently meeting with public officials and others to discuss possible improvements to I-70 in the context of local land use plans and other community/landowner

concerns. This will provide needed information as improvement alternatives are developed.

A key issue in Section 3 will be the construction of an additional Missouri River crossing near Rocheport. This new "companion" bridge will carry three of the six lanes envisioned for the new I-70, with the existing bridge carrying the other three lanes. Another issue in Section 3 is the evaluation of a possible rest stop and visitor's center in proximity to the river. The river bluffs and the Overton Bottoms area each hold the potential to provide a unique rest stop experience for travelers. A number of potential locations are being evaluated now.

A public meeting will be held in May to review study information collected to date and to discuss the improvements being considered in



Section 3 (see details on page 2). In addition to the meeting, a special session will be held with those who own property adjacent to or near I-70. Special invitations and notices will be sent to property owners and the news media.

Based on input gathered at the meeting, the Section 3 Team will determine which of the improvement alternatives are most reasonable and should be carried forward for more detailed analysis. That analysis will consider each alternative's benefits and impacts on the natural and man-made environments. Another public meeting is anticipated later this year to share the results of the analysis process.

If you have questions or concerns about activities in Section 3, please call the project office at 1-800-590-0066.



Section 4

Route BB to Eastern Columbia

This spring the Section 4 Team will conclude its screening of three corridors established by the First Tier Study for potential improvements in the Columbia area. These include the Far North, Near North and Existing Route Corridors. The northern corridors are one-mile wide and represent a general area in which improvements could be placed.

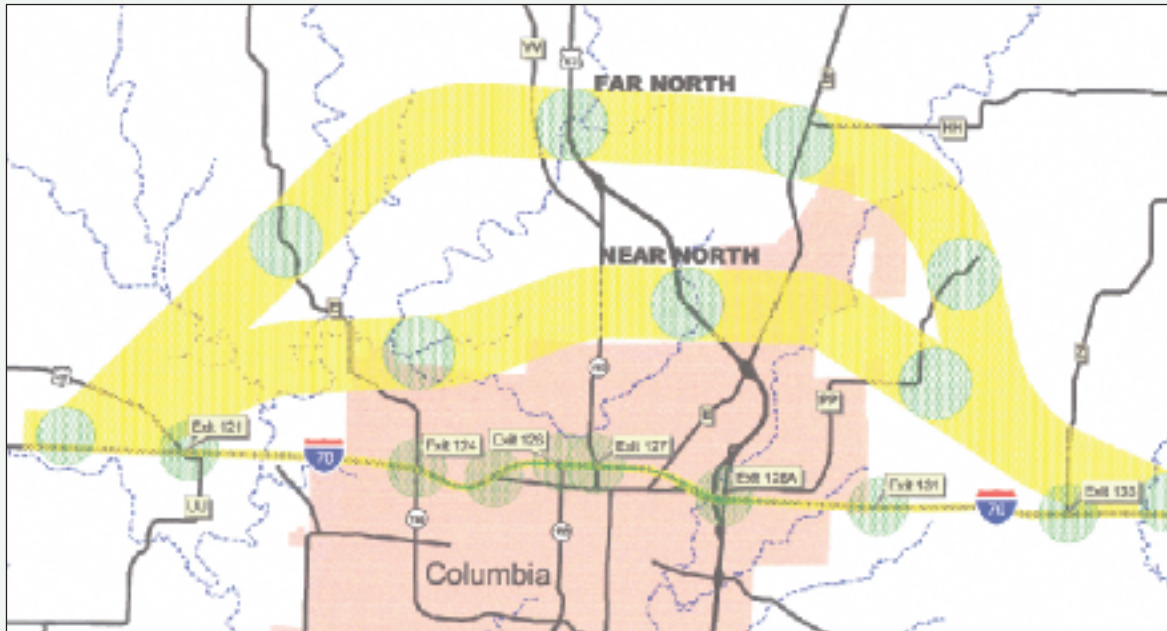
The corridors are being evaluated for their ability to meet the goals of the Improve I-70 project: to increase safety, reduce congestion and improve efficiency on the existing route. The screening process will determine which corridors should proceed into the next phase of study, and which should be eliminated from consideration.

The screening process includes use of a computerized traffic model to evaluate how I-70 would perform under future traffic conditions. Based on preliminary results of this model, it appears that the Far North Corridor would not be able to draw enough traffic off the existing corridor and therefore would not solve the problems on existing I-70 through Columbia. The results on the Near North Corridor are indicating that it could draw more traffic, but perhaps still not enough to ease the problems on the existing route through Columbia.

The Section 4 Team has worked closely with the City of Columbia and Boone County to ensure the model includes the latest local

traffic data and land use plans. Also working with the Section 4 Team is a citizen-based group that reflects a wide range of interests in the Columbia area. The Improve I-70 Advisory Group is not a decision-making body, but provides meaningful input to MoDOT as it considers improvement options in and around Columbia.

A public meeting will be held in April to discuss the corridor screening process and provide the study team's recommendation for which corridor(s) should be dropped from consideration. Also available at the meeting will be preliminary information on how the existing route might be improved. Details about the meeting can be found on page 2.



Proposed Columbia relocation corridors from the First Tier Study.

After the meeting, the Section 4 Team will develop more detailed improvement alternatives within the remaining corridor(s). Much closer to the size of an actual highway, each improvement alternative will be evaluated for its potential impacts on the natural and man-made environment. Advisory Group meetings and other public activities are expected later this year to share details about the preliminary improvement alternatives.

If you have questions or concerns about activities in Section 4, please call the project office at 1-800-590-0066.



Section 5

Route Z to U.S. 54

The Section 5 Team is in the process of gathering information and data and reviewing decisions made during the First Tier Study. This includes a corridor screening to determine if widening and reconstruction should occur to the north or south of the existing route.

The team will share corridor screening information and seek input at an April 2 public meeting in Section 6 (see details on page 2).

More detailed work in Section 5 will begin later this year. If you have questions or concerns about activities in Section 5, contact the project office at 1-800-590-0066.



Section 6

Kingdom City to Montgomery City

Since the Improve I-70 project began, much of the work of the Section 6 Team has been focused on two areas; Kingdom City and Mineola Hill.

The Section 6 Team is working closely with the Kingdom City Highway Coalition, a group formed by local citizens during the First Tier Study. The Coalition is reviewing data and information and providing input and advice to the Section 6 Team. This is not a decision-making body, but is providing meaningful input to MoDOT as it considers improvement alternatives for the U.S. 54/I-70 (Kingdom City) interchange.

To date the study team has developed and analyzed over a dozen alternatives in various combinations near Kingdom City. With input from the Coalition, the team is in the process of narrowing the field of interchange alternatives to those that best meet the goals of improving safety and reducing congestion.

The team is also working with the Mineola Hill Subcommittee (a group of state and federal agency representatives) on improvements near Mineola Hill. Because this area includes a number of historically significant resources and environmentally sensitivity features, a possible relocation of I-70 is being considered. After initial review of several relocation options, the team has identified a concept that would shift I-70 to the north of the existing route, from an area just west of Danville to an area east of Williamsburg. Several options for keeping I-70 on its existing alignment through Mineola Hill are also being considered.

A public meeting will be held on April 2 to provide study information and receive input on potential improvements in the area. If you have questions or concerns about activities in Section 6, please call the project office at 1-800-590-0066.



Section 7

Route 19 to Lake St. Louis

The Section 7 Team is currently completing a screening process to determine which of four conceptual corridors for I-70 improvements should be carried forward for more detailed study, and which should be eliminated from further consideration. The four corridors were established during the First Tier Study and represent the general areas in which improvements could be placed.

The existing corridor and one-mile wide corridors in the South, Near North, and Far North are being evaluated based on their ability to increase safety, reduce congestion and improve traffic efficiency on I-70. The screening process will include the use of a computerized traffic model and will consider each corridor's:

- Compatibility with local and regional planning goals,
- Local and regional economic impacts,
- Natural resources impacts,
- Preliminary estimated costs, and
- Transportation impacts.

In addition to traffic data, the team is also considering input from representatives of local communities, agencies, and planning commissions, collected at a Land Use Forum held in Wright City last summer.

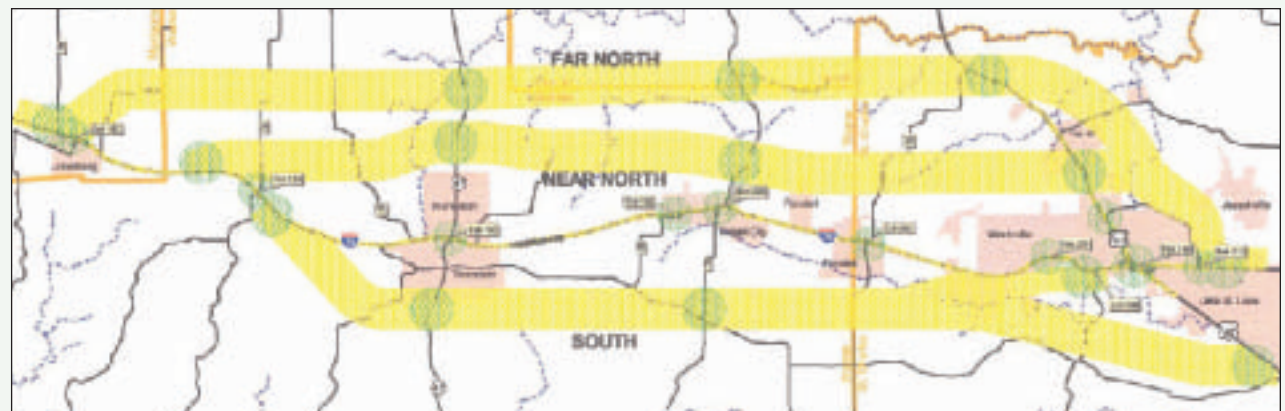
Participants were asked to consider how improvements in each of the four conceptual corridors might impact their communities, while considering the screening criteria.

While a few communities regard the relocation of I-70 as an opportunity for increased economic development, access and mobility, most participants favored widening the existing I-70. Communities along I-70 see the highway as their "Main Street" and plan their land use and economic development activities accordingly. Additionally, plans for

residential and light industrial developments within the conceptual corridors could be disrupted with an I-70 relocation. Others were concerned with the preservation of their local community character, potential noise impacts, and the loss of farmland and other natural resources.

Two identical public meetings will be held in April to discuss the corridor screening process and receive input on the results (see page 2 for more details).

After the public meetings, the Section 7 Team will develop more detailed improvement alternatives within the remaining corridor(s). Public meetings and other events will be conducted later this year to share details about the preliminary improvement alternatives.



Proposed Warrenton/Wright City/Wentzville relocation corridors from the First Tier Study.

Documenting the Landscape, *continued from page 3*

"We also welcome input from the public," said Toni Prawl, one of two MoDOT architectural historians working on the I-70 project. "We want to make every effort to learn all we can about these properties and oftentimes the oral histories given to us by property owners and others in the area are our best source since a lot of these things aren't recorded."

Similar effort is exerted for every element under consideration in this study – social and economic characteristics, air quality, noise, parkland impacts, prime farmland soils, water quality, terrestrial and aquatic communities, archaeological resources, hazardous waste sites and visual quality.

Prawl, who has been with MoDOT for 10 years,

considers the Improve I-70 work to be some of the most challenging historical work MoDOT has undertaken. "It's unique from a number of standpoints," she said. "First is just the scale. It's a 200-mile corridor which is much larger than most of our projects. Usually our work is confined to just one county. Here we're trying to make sense of a long corridor that crosses the entire state.



Toni Prawl
Architectural Historian, MoDOT

"This work will also require a lot of extra coordination since some of the work will be done by MoDOT staff and some will be contracted out. We'll need to approach things the same way on the east side of the corridor as they do in the western sections.

"I-70 has a national scope, too. It's one of the nation's oldest interstates, but in comparison to some of Missouri's other routes, it is a fairly recent facility."

To learn more about MoDOT's protocols for cultural history, visit the MoDOT Web site at <http://www.modot.state.mo.us/preliminary/PS/architect.htm>.

Contact Us

Your questions, comments and concerns about Improve I-70 are always welcome. Contact the Improve I-70 Team by phone at **1-800-590-0066**, by email at **comments@ImproveI70.org**, or by mail at

Improve I-70
P.O. Box 410482
Kansas City, MO 64141

You may also visit our Web site at **www.ImproveI70.org**. For questions about other MoDOT projects and initiatives, call 1-888-ASK MODOT, or visit www.modot.org.

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